

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (CA-47), a member of the Joint Economic Committee, today slammed her colleagues who voted against extending emergency unemployment benefits for millions of American families. H.R. 6419, the Emergency Unemployment Compensation Continuation Act, would have saved a critical lifeline for hard-working Americans who have lost their jobs. But because the House voted against the emergency extension, unemployment insurance benefits will almost certainly expire at the end of the month.

“With a nearly 10% unemployment rate, Orange County can’t afford to let unemployment benefits expire,” said Rep. Sanchez. “Unemployment insurance has proven to be one of the most cost-effective and fast-acting ways to stimulate the economy. Cutting this lifeline now, as we prepare to enter the holiday season, will be an enormous blow to families struggling to make ends meet in this recession. While I am disappointed by today’s setback, I will not give up the fight to make these benefits available to families in my district.”

If passed, the bill would have extended the Emergency Unemployment Compensation and Extended Benefits programs through February 28, 2011. The Emergency Unemployment Compensation Continuation Act would **not** have provided more weeks of unemployment insurance, but rather ensured that workers who exhaust their regular six months of state benefits can receive federal unemployment benefits.

Without an extension, the Department of Labor projects that 1.98 million workers nationwide will lose their benefits by January 1, 2011. By the end of February 2011, the number will swell to 4.4 million. Since the unemployment insurance system’s founding 75 years ago, Congress has never terminated an emergency unemployment program when the unemployment rate was above 7.4%.